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3
4 KING COUNTY

5 2007-2008

6 CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION

7 PUBLIC HEARING
8
9

10 BEFORE:

11 JAMES WILLIAMS (CHAIRPERSON), COMMISSIONER

12 TRISHA BENNETT, COMMISSIONER

13 PETE von REICHBAUER, KING COUNTY COUNCILMEMBER

14 MIKE LOWRY, COMMISSIONER
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21 Federal Way Senior Center

4016 South 352nd Street

22 Auburn, Washington
23

24 6:40 p.m. to 7:25 p.m.

25 July 9, 2007

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 (The hearing commenced at 6:40 p.m.)

3 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Good evening, ladies and
4 gentlemen. My name is James Williams, and I am your
5 neighbor from Federal Way. I am here with my co-chair
6 Trisha Bennett tonight, serving as your chair and
7 co-chair for this public hearing on the King County
8 charter.

9 First on behalf of the entire King County
10 Charter Review Commission and Executive Sims we want to
11 say thank you to each and every one of you who took the
12 time out of your schedules to join us tonight. This is
13 an example of good citizenship. This is an example of
14 why King County is one of the finest places in the
15 world, I think, to live in and work, and we salute you
16 for actively getting involved with your government and
17 coming out and actually sharing, hopefully, some info
18 on the Charter Review process.

19 Trisha and I will try to do some introductions
20 for the folks who are in the audience so you get a feel
21 for who is here and can look to them potentially for
22 insight and guidance if you have questions about the
23 issues. We're going to start with the commissioners
24 who are present.

25 We have with us Commissioner John Jensen.

1 John, if you could stand and raise your hand.

2 John, tell them where you're from, by the way.

3 COMMISSIONER JENSEN: I'm from Newcastle.

4 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: He's from Newcastle, but

5 I assume he's welcome here in Federal Way. Is that

6 okay with everybody?

7 (Laughter)

8 Any objection?

9 We have Terry Lavender. Terry, would you
10 please stand? Terry, where are you from?

11 COMMISSIONER LAVENDER: I live in
12 unincorporated King County between Woodinville and
13 Duvall.

14 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: You heard that, ladies
15 and gentlemen, unincorporated King County. Very
16 important point. Got to have them in the audience.

17 We also have Rebecha Cusack from King County
18 Council. Where are you from?

19 REBECHA CUSACK: I am from Auburn.

20 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: We are going to be
21 joined at some point in the future hopefully by former
22 Governor Lowry. He actually is one of the co-chairs of
23 the King County Charter Review Commission itself, but
24 in the meantime we'll go ahead and let Trisha recognize
25 some of the local folks who are here and are directly

1 related to governing Federal Way and a little bit of
2 Auburn.

3 Before she does that, though, I have one point
4 of personal liberty. I'd like to note that my wife is
5 in the audience, Anna Williams. Okay. Thank you.

6 COMMISSIONER BENNETT: And your daughter.

7 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: And my daughter, that's
8 right.

9 COMMISSIONER BENNETT: Hello. Welcome,
10 everybody, and we're joined by some of our elected
11 officials from Federal Way, and we'd like to take the
12 time to introduce them. Councilman Peter von
13 Reichbauer sitting back there.

14 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: A little applause for
15 Pete.

16 (Applause)

17 COMMISSIONER BENNETT: And we have City
18 Councilwoman Linda Kochmar.

19 (Applause)

20 And we have Representative Skip Priest, and he
21 has the distinguish of being my husband. He just
22 wouldn't change his last name.

23 (Laughter and applause)

24 REPRESENTATIVE PRIEST: I would have, though.
25 If it had been up to that, I would have.

1 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Sure.

2 COMMISSIONER BENNETT: Governor Lowry should be
3 joining us momentarily.

4 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Hopefully.

5 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: We couldn't be here
6 tonight, of course, without the wonderful and excellent
7 staff of King County. We have with us the Charter
8 Review Coordinator Mark Yango. Mark, please stand up,
9 raise your hand. He's the guy who did all the
10 backbreaking work to set up the loud speakers and make
11 sure all of the mailings got out so you all would be
12 informed about the meeting tonight.

13 We also have with us the project manager for
14 this, Corrie Watterson, and administrative liaison
15 Charlotte Ohashi. There you are. Thank you very much.

16 All right, the format. The format is this: We
17 have a procedure in place, but the real point of this
18 discussion tonight is to get input from you on the King
19 County charter.

20 Just so you know what the charter is, and
21 Corrie is going to get into, I think, a PowerPoint
22 presentation that gives you more detail than you
23 probably want to know. But the Cliffs Notes version is
24 the charter is essentially the equivalent of King
25 County's constitution. It's the thing that sets the

1 minimum floor, if you will, for the actions of the
2 folks who work for the county government. It's the
3 thing that governs how they do their jobs on a daily
4 basis, and it's something that everybody in King County
5 has a vested interest in ensuring is always up-to-date
6 and always well maintained.

7 That brings us to why we're here. We're
8 serving as commissioners voluntarily. We were
9 appointed by King County Executive Sims, but our
10 purpose is to assist with gathering information and
11 take a look at the charter which is, by the way, 40
12 years old. Every ten years or so the charter requires
13 a fresh look to make sure that it is up-to-date
14 addressing all the needs of the citizens in King
15 County, and our job is to make sure as commissioners we
16 are getting the very best input we can from all of the
17 wonderful citizens throughout the county.

18 So we're here with you because we want to
19 involve you as South King County residents in this
20 process. We think your input is fundamental to us
21 making the right kinds of recommendations as to any
22 kind of changes that need to be made to the charter by
23 King County Council, and quite frankly, it's a great
24 opportunity for us to get out and see our fellow
25 citizens and neighbors who we don't get to see nearly

1 enough most of the time.

2 So without further adieu I'm going to ask
3 Corrie to come up and give us that fabulous PowerPoint
4 presentation on the Charter Review process.

5 Now, the preview is she's going to tell you
6 basically about the Commission itself. She's going to
7 tell you what we've been tasked to do. She's going to
8 tell you how we've been doing so far, and she's
9 probably got to highlight some of the hot issues that
10 have been identified already by some of the other
11 public hearings that have taken place before this one
12 tonight.

13 Corrie?

14 PROJECT MANAGER WATTERSON: I hope to do all
15 that and more. I'm Corrie Watterson, the project
16 manager of this Commission, and --

17 AUDIENCE MEMBER: We can't hear you.

18 PROJECT MANAGER WATTERSON: Okay. Is that
19 better?

20 So if you have one of these presentations, I'm
21 on slide 8.

22 So as James told you, the charter is the basic
23 blueprint for county government. It's like a
24 constitution. All the county's actions must be
25 consistent with the charter; so it's binding like a

1 constitution in that way, but the charter is limited.
2 It's limited by federal law and it's limited by state
3 law, so you can't have conflicts. The county is a
4 creature of the state. And as James also said, it's 40
5 years old this year, so with relatively few amendments
6 the charter has stood the test of time.

7 So a little bit about what a charter issue is.
8 Charter-Only Solution is one of the things you think
9 about when you're looking at a charter issue. That
10 initiative is best resolved by changing the charter,
11 not by simply passing another law or administrative
12 action.

13 It's long-term. It's not setting the Executive
14 salary, something that's easily going to be outdated.
15 It should be something that's going to be around for
16 the next 10 years and beyond.

17 And it addresses the core values of our county:
18 checks and balances, accountability, and merit.

19 So what have we seen in the past? This is the
20 fifth time that we've been through this process as a
21 county. A few of the things that we've seen, probably
22 most of you have heard of the reductions in the
23 Council. We went from 13 to 9 in 2004 and had gone
24 from 9 to 13 when King County and Metro merged.

25 Guaranteeing freedom of religion and conscience

1 in 2001.

2 An independent Board of Ethics was essentially
3 defeated by the people in '97.

4 Limiting campaign contributions in 1989. That
5 passed.

6 And updating the County's anti-discrimination
7 provision.

8 So really broad range here; not meant to limit
9 or affect your comments in any way. It's just to give
10 you a sense of what we've done with the charter.

11 A little bit of history on the Charter Review.
12 May 1969 we became the first county in the state of
13 Washington to have its own constitution. The Charter
14 Review process is included in the charter itself by the
15 Board of Freeholders, and as I said before, most
16 amendments until the nineties were relatively minor,
17 and then we had a few in quick succession including
18 reduction of the Council.

19 How can the charter be amended? The first way
20 is the process that you're participating in right now,
21 and that's the Charter Review Commission; so that
22 authority, as I said, is based in the charter. The
23 Commission is going to send amendments to the Council.
24 The Council is going to consider them. It will either
25 approve them or not approve them, and the ones that are

1 approved by the Council will go to the voters for
2 November of 2008. So you can see those that make it
3 through that whole gamut on your ballot.

4 The second way the charter helps you is the
5 Council can independently initiate amendments to the
6 charter. Those also have to go to the citizens for a
7 vote.

8 And the third way has been recently established
9 by the courts, and that's citizen initiative. So
10 according to that ruling the citizens can directly
11 initiate a charter amendment, one of which is going to
12 be on your ballot this year in November, and that's
13 Initiative 25 to elect the Director of Elections for
14 King County.

15 So your role in this process we've already
16 touched on a little bit. Right now, hearing feedback
17 from the public and from organizations around the
18 county. The second phase, the Commission is going to
19 huddle up and deliberate; break up into subcommittees
20 and think about all the issues that they've heard,
21 propose the amendments.

22 They'll come out of hiding in March of 2008 and
23 let everybody know what they think should be done and
24 listen to feedback, public debate.

25 And then finally, the amendments will go to the

1 Council in May of 2008, and you'll see the ones that
2 make it through on your ballot in November of 2008.

3 So as James said, I'm going to go over a few of
4 the issues that we've heard so far. These are from
5 citizens and organizations.

6 A really hot topic is appointed versus elected
7 positions. That's both the sheriff, the elections
8 director, and even the auditor.

9 Campaign finance reform.

10 The electoral system. We've heard a lot about
11 that.

12 The initiative process.

13 And another really big issue, local services in
14 unincorporated areas.

15 And, finally, partisan versus nonpartisan
16 elected positions; again the sheriff, the elections
17 director if that was an elected position, particularly
18 the County Council.

19 Okay. So we're all ready to get started. A
20 few questions to jog your thinking if you don't have
21 your questions and comments already prepared.

22 So first, what major regional issues need to be
23 addressed now and over the next ten years?

24 How can King County government simultaneously
25 meet the needs of both urban and rural residents and

1 should that rural-urban breakdown look different?

2 And, finally, King County seeks to be an
3 accountable, efficient, effective, and fair government.
4 Is it living up to these standards.

5 So without further adieu I'll turn this back
6 over to James.

7 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you, Corrie.

8 All right. Here's how we're going to proceed.

9 First of all, never fear. This is an open
10 mike. We want everybody who has a comment to come
11 forward and share those comments with us. Although
12 they will be transcribed, the point of doing that is to
13 make sure we capture every nugget of wisdom that you
14 want to share with us. If you don't feel comfortable
15 coming up to the microphone, put it in writing and I
16 can read it into the record or the court reporter will
17 presumably read it into the record, but someone will
18 read your comment.

19 What we're going to do now is go through the
20 sign-in log in the order of entry identifying those
21 folks who said yes they would like to speak and address
22 a point first.

23 COMMISSIONER BENNETT: One thing, I don't know
24 if Councilman von Reichbauer stepped out, but we would
25 like to invite him to make some comments as well. He

1 may have just stepped outside for a bit.

2 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Actually, we can
3 integrate him as a part of the overall comments as
4 they're being made this evening. So when the
5 councilmember comes back in, we of course would like to
6 hear from him if he has comments.

7 Until then why don't we get started with the
8 folks who have signed up and are here and would like to
9 make comments starting with H. David Kaplan.
10 Mr. Kaplan, please join us up front.

11 How about a round of applause for your
12 neighbor.

13 (Applause)

14 All right. Go ahead, Mr. Kaplan.

15 H. DAVID KAPLAN: First of all, how much time
16 do I have?

17 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Fifteen minutes.

18 H. DAVID KAPLAN: My name is H. David Kaplan.
19 I'm from Federal Way. My issue tonight is the lack of
20 oversight of the King County Library System. For the
21 last three years residents throughout the county have
22 been attempting to get the King County Library Board
23 and the executive director to respond to public
24 inquiries about budgeting, financing, staffing, and a
25 myriad of other problems. We have been stonewalled by

1 a board that occasionally comes to meetings if they
2 come at all. Then they come late and leave early, and
3 one member of the Board has been absent for more than a
4 year and has not been replaced.

5 Finally there was such a human cry that the
6 Board agreed to a survey of the public. Well, the
7 survey results came in damning the Board and the
8 executive director for many things, and there has been
9 no change whatsoever.

10 My issue, really, is the fact, and I was
11 thinking since July 4th was so recently, we're being
12 taxed without representation. The library board is a
13 taxing entity, and yet when you go to them, you have no
14 representation. They have no oversight. They're
15 accountable to nobody.

16 So what we would like to have is a charter
17 revision that says that the King County Library Board
18 shall report to the County Council for accountability
19 in finances, in construction, in personnel policies.
20 They still have the right to do taxes because the
21 people vote on whether or not they want taxes. But
22 there has to be some way that the public has recourse
23 to a nonfunctioning, nonresponsive public agency that
24 is taxing us. It is just illogical. And I think
25 Margaret Nelson following me will have a lot more to

1 say on the issue.

2 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you. That was
3 very helpful. Thank you very much, sir.

4 Next we'd like to hear from James Burrows.

5 Mr. Burrows, are you here?

6 JAMES BURROWS: That's me.

7 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: A round of applause for
8 Mr. Burrows.

9 (Applause)

10 JAMES BURROWS: Thank you.

11 I'm Jim Burrows, and I took the horrible trip
12 down I-5 from Burien, and what I'm trying to push here
13 is IRV. Does anybody know what IRV is? Hold your hand
14 up.

15 CITIZEN: I do.

16 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Is that a drug?

17 JAMES BURROWS: No. It's Instant Runoff
18 Voting, is what it is, and it's also called RC, Rank
19 Choice Voting, and what it does is it gets rid of the
20 primary. In other words, you don't have to spend a
21 million dollars, I guess probably King County spends
22 even more than that, on the primary. Essentially
23 everyone that wants to vote gets to rank their choices.
24 In other words, everyone that wants a position on the
25 County Council or whatever gets on the ballot, and then

1 people make their choices, and then you go through a
2 process to decide who actually won. I don't want to go
3 into that. It's a lot of mathematics and stuff like
4 that.

5 Okay, the thing is, finally, that Pierce County
6 is doing it. They had a charter meeting, and the
7 council committee and everything, and people yelled
8 about IRV. Apparently they're going to do it. So if
9 now King County could do it, just think of the power.
10 Maybe we could get it in the state, too. That's where
11 we really need it.

12 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you, sir.
13 Everybody follow what this gentleman was saying about
14 the IRV? Okay. Good.

15 Next we should hear from Margaret Nelson.
16 Margaret Nelson, ladies and gentlemen.

17 (Applause)

18 MARGARET NELSON: Before I begin, I would like
19 to hand a copy of some of my comments to the
20 commissioners so that they might have an easier time.

21 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Even better, she's got
22 written comments which I will yield to the court
23 reporter for inclusion in the record at this point.

24 Madam Court Reporter, would you please make
25 that an attachment to this transcript.

1 MARGARET NELSON: Good evening. My name is
2 Margaret Nelson. I live in Federal Way. I am a member
3 of an ad hoc committee of citizens who like the
4 libraries in King County but who have found over the
5 last 15 months or so that there have been some problems
6 that we have seen, and we need help in figuring out
7 what to do.

8 The King County Library System is not run by
9 the county. It operates as a rural library system
10 under a Washington State statute, although the rural
11 areas of King County are much depleted and many of the
12 municipalities in King County are now part of the King
13 County Library System; for example, Federal Way.

14 The King County Library System is a taxing
15 district, but the King County Executive appoints the
16 five members of the King County Library System Board of
17 Trustees with Council concurrence, and that's why I'm
18 here, because once these Board members are appointed by
19 the Executive and vetted by the members of the King
20 County Council, there is no formal oversight of their
21 activities by any elected officials ever during their
22 terms. They are accountable to no one.

23 The five-member Board has often had only three
24 members in attendance at monthly Board meetings, and
25 one member has not attended for over a year which

1 disturbs people like me who attend the meetings.

2 There are no performance audits of King County
3 Library System, nor is there any oversight of the
4 decisions and the decision making processes of the
5 Board of Trustees. The Trustees rely on the King
6 County Library System director and staff for
7 information and analysis of issues and proposals, and
8 they do not seem to either have or to be able to make
9 the time to thoroughly investigate these proposals and
10 analysis to determine whether or not these are
11 objective and based on fact.

12 King County Library System has an annual \$82
13 million operating budget. In addition, in 2004 we
14 passed a \$172 million construction bond for libraries.

15 There is no public process for planning the
16 financial decisions which are made in the committee
17 meetings of the Board, and these meetings are closed to
18 the public because they generally have two people on a
19 committee, and two people is less than a quorum, and
20 therefore they can keep the public out, and they have.

21 New systems, construction, and huge purchases
22 such as the \$700,000 machine at the regional library
23 which is used to check books in automatically did not
24 have any cost-benefit analysis done before they decided
25 to buy it. They just went ahead and did it. \$700,000

1 with a \$50,000-a-year maintenance fee for one machine
2 to check in books.

3 There is a lack of obvious justifications for
4 expenditures of the 2004 \$172 million construction
5 bond. There has been no public justification as to why
6 some libraries are being rebuilt while others are
7 remodeled, and in some cases the current library is
8 less than ten years old.

9 You might consider that the Woodmont library
10 was built in 2000. They knew that there was going to
11 be growth in the area. They currently have the
12 Woodmont library closed because they are expanding it.
13 They are approximately doubling the size. We asked
14 them, well, you sort of knew that Woodmont wasn't big
15 enough when you put this library in in 2000. Did you
16 make plans for the expansion? No.

17 Several communities have complained that the
18 King County Library System does not listen to them, and
19 this lack of listening may result in failures of public
20 bond promises. I would cite the Federal Way 320th
21 library which I was involved in. I would cite the
22 problems on Vashon. I would cite the problems with
23 Duvall. I would cite the problems with Newcastle. I
24 could go on in a list.

25 We found in our committees that there were

1 people from all over the county that were having these
2 same types of problems.

3 We, the non-Seattle residents of King County,
4 are currently paying the costs for Seattle residents
5 who can use the King County Library System but are not
6 taxed by KCLS. Currently Seattle people check out more
7 books from KCLS than KCLS residents check out from
8 Seattle. There's supposed to be a deal where you don't
9 get paid when they're deciding one of the resource
10 feuds.*

11 Well, the Seattle Public Library owes the King
12 County Library System approximately \$5 million in the
13 last seven years, and there's been no effort to have
14 this money given back to us who are the taxpayers who
15 are paying for the King County Library System.

16 So I ask the Charter Commission to consider,
17 what would be best for King County Library System in
18 the long run? What charter changes could the
19 Commission's legal staff recommend that would help make
20 the King County Library System and its Board responsive
21 to the County Council and the public since the
22 Executive appoints the Board members and the County
23 Council okays them in the charter.

24 * (The court reporter had difficulty
25 understanding the speaker's last statement.)

1 What charter changes could be made to require
2 an annual performance audit of the King County Library
3 System. Currently there's no annual performance audit.
4 They can do whatever they want. Who cares? Okay?

5 Would the Commission please instruct the
6 Charter Commission staff to study library systems in
7 other Washington counties -- Everett runs in a
8 different way than we do in King County -- to see how
9 they manage to provide elected officials oversight for
10 hopefully better planning and management, and then
11 would they recommend changes to the charter to
12 implement these improvements.

13 We hope that these changes would help to ensure
14 a fully engaged Board of Trustees and provide
15 additional measures of accountability and some checks
16 and balances on our money's use in the King County
17 Library System.

18 Thank you very much.

19 (Applause)

20 COMMISSIONER BENNETT: Can I ask one quick
21 question?

22 You mentioned that there are some others that
23 you felt were models. Woodmont or Everett?

24 MARGARET NELSON: Everett. The city of Everett
25 -- For example, in King County we have got the Seattle

1 Public Library which is in King County but is
2 separately taxed from the King County Library System.
3 I understand that they've got a similar large city of
4 Everett but that Everett distributes its materials
5 across more of the county than Seattle does. And what
6 we're trying to do is see, is there anything that could
7 be tweaked in the charter so that a beneficial change
8 could be made to try to have some accountability of the
9 monies and what's being done in the King County Library
10 System.

11 COMMISSIONER BENNETT: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: That's very helpful.

13 Next we'll hear from Linda Kochmar, your
14 representative.

15 (Applause)

16 LINDA KOCHMAR: Very nice to meet you,
17 Mr. Williams. I understand you're from Federal Way?

18 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: I am from Federal Way.
19 Call me James.

20 LINDA KOCHMAR: James; and of course I know
21 Trisha and Skip.

22 I'm here on behalf of the Federal Way City
23 Council who passed a resolution. We actually sent a
24 letter to the County Council supporting the nonpartisan
25 position, to have the elected officials at the county

1 also nonpartisan, and I could talk about a lot of
2 issues. I could talk about the annexation of the
3 freeway, I could talk about regional issues, but I'm
4 going to confine my talk tonight on the nonpartisan
5 issue.

6 This is the home of the 30th District
7 Democrats. This is where the 30th District meets, and
8 as a nonpartisan official I want to feel free to go to
9 either party, either Republican or Democrat, and not
10 feel that I have to wait to have an invitation because
11 we are elected to serve everyone. And I've heard
12 people say before, why does it make a difference
13 whether you're nonpartisan or affiliated with a party?
14 The difference is this: When you're in a body of
15 elected officials, and with Pete it's nine members,
16 with the City Council it's seven members, all you need
17 is a majority to reach a consensus. So in a
18 seven-member body, it's four people. Four people in
19 this Federal Way area essentially can control the vote.
20 It's difficult enough -- and in a nine-member body it's
21 five people.

22 It's difficult enough when you're nonpartisan.
23 It's even more difficult when you have party
24 affiliations because then you are coerced, is kind of a
25 pleasant word to say that, to vote a certain way, and I

1 think that our elected officials should be there to
2 serve all of us. We all have strong opinions. We all
3 have strong egos. I didn't know I had one, but I found
4 out I did, and we all have --

5 I think the thing that identifies most elected
6 officials is they want to make a change, and they think
7 that what they believe is going to serve their
8 constituents the best. And so how do you arrive at a
9 consensus when you're serving on a body. Skip is in a
10 body. He's in a body of, let's see, with the
11 representatives it's 99?

12 SKIP PRIEST: Ninety-eight.

13 LINDA KOCHMAR: Ninety-eight? And it's very
14 difficult in a body of 98 people to come to a
15 consensus, and he's dealing with partisan issues all
16 the time.

17 So what I want to make you understand is how
18 difficult it is to serve on a body of folks, to deal
19 with all of the issues, to deal with all of your
20 personal issues, and then to deal with partisan issues
21 on top of it all.

22 And so what I'd like to read into the record
23 are a couple of thoughts. County work is not ideo- --
24 sorry. Council work is not --

25 In the past eight years only 16 of over 3500

1 measures approved by the county council were voted
2 along partisan lines. This is less than one-half of
3 one percent. There is no such thing as Republican
4 pothole or Democrat pothole.

5 The word I was trying to use is ideological.

6 Party primary problems and voter choice. This
7 change if you were to choose nonpartisan county
8 officials would then give back the freedom of choice to
9 voters so that when you vote in a primary then you then
10 could have freedom of choice. You don't have to pick
11 two people from either the Republican party or two
12 people from the Democrat party.

13 It would increase competition in elections.

14 Parties limit competition. Many decisions in a
15 partisan race are made behind closed doors well before
16 the public has a say.

17 And then nonpartisan partners. Most of your
18 City Council, your hospitals, your water, sewer, your
19 fire are all nonpartisan positions. I've never
20 understood why the County Council would have to be
21 partisan. It didn't make sense to me, and so when I'm
22 dealing with the County Council, I'm very thankful that
23 I have Pete to talk to. I feel very comfortable in
24 talking with my County Council official. However, I do
25 not feel comfortable at times talking to some of the

1 other County Council officials. I would feel more
2 comfortable if there was less partisanship.

3 We're all working on your behalf, and we're
4 working together for you locally.

5 I've got to tell you a joke. One time I went
6 to hear the Secretary of Transportation, Norm Mineta,
7 under Clinton give a speech, and he was saying that he
8 was a mayor in a town, a large city before he went to
9 become Secretary of Transportation, and he was in his
10 office when he heard somebody in the outer office say,
11 I have a pothole. I want it fixed. I'm not going to
12 take no for an answer and I'm not going to talk to
13 anybody lower than the mayor. And Mayor Mineta came
14 out and said, "There is nobody lower than the mayor."

15 The reason I'm telling you that is because it's
16 very, very difficult for us to be in the positions we
17 are, to try and do a good job, and a lot of the things
18 that affect all of you are things that are both local
19 and regional in your cities and in your county; very
20 difficult for us to work for you. I simply cannot
21 understand why the County Council would not be
22 nonpartisan.

23 And then finally, there's a lot of support for
24 nonpartisanship. The Municipal League in 1967, as
25 early as 1967 endorsed the idea of nonpartisanship. In

1 2005 the League of Women Voters publicly supported
2 making the positions nonpartisan, and over the years
3 there have been various different members of the County
4 Council supporting nonpartisan positions, and currently
5 it is Pete von Reichbauer.

6 And so what I want to say to you is I sincerely
7 hope that you will look at that very, very seriously.
8 Take the partisanship out of the race and put it back,
9 really, in the hands of the voters. Thank you.

10 (Applause)

11 COMMISSIONER BENNETT: Thank you, Linda.

12 Councilman von Reichbauer is here, and you do
13 so much for our community. I was wondering if -- We'd
14 like to invite you, if you would like, to make some
15 comments.

16 COUNCILMEMBER VON REICHBAUER: No. I would
17 rather listen than talk.

18 COMMISSIONER BENNETT: You'd rather listen than
19 talk?

20 COUNCILMEMBER VON REICHBAUER: Yes.

21 COMMISSIONER BENNETT: All right.

22 COUNCILMEMBER VON REICHBAUER: Thank you very
23 much.

24 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you for being
25 here, sir.

1 We're now at the point where we have open mike.
2 For those of you who didn't sign up on the way in and
3 heard the issues thrown out, if there was something
4 that stimulated your brain cells and you said to
5 yourself, you know, I've got a thought, some input that
6 I'd like to make on that, now is your time to come
7 forward and tell us how you feel.

8 And just in case you don't have anything to
9 add, I will go through a list of other issues just to
10 tell you what's going on all around King County with
11 your other friends and neighbors so you are fully
12 informed in Federal Way about the issues that the
13 Charter Commission will be grappling with.

14 You heard about the nonpartisan question.
15 There is some suggestion that the Director of Elections
16 position should be nonpartisan. It's currently
17 appointed by King County Executive. As you know, we've
18 had some challenges on elections in King County, and
19 there are some people who believe that perhaps those
20 challenges might be better dealt with if that person or
21 that position was an elected one and beholden to the
22 people as opposed to the Executive himself. I guess
23 we'll be taking that one up. If you have input on
24 that, if you don't want to talk about it right now you
25 can send me an e-mail or just write it on a piece of

1 paper, and I'll collect it for the record after we're
2 done here.

3 Another issue is this Instant Runoff Voting.
4 Mr. Burrows talked about it. It's hot. The reason why
5 is it provides voters with an opportunity to
6 potentially get the bigger bang for their votes.
7 Instead of voting in a primary for an individual, you
8 can vote essentially for a slate of people and whoever
9 wins the most number of votes actually gets the offices
10 that are available. So if you like two or three people
11 and you have to rank them one, two, three and you're
12 satisfied with any of the three being King County
13 Council people you actually could vote for all three.
14 And if your neighbor shared your votes about all three,
15 those three out of, say, ten who got the most votes
16 would actually get elected. So you wouldn't have to go
17 back over and over and over again to see who's going to
18 win.

19 Is that pretty much it, Mr. Burrows?

20 JAMES BURROWS: It also helps with the
21 nonpartisan to essentially to get rid of the primary
22 where you have to say, I'm a Democrat or I'm a
23 Republican.

24 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: It also ties into the
25 nonpartisan issue where you don't have to worry about

1 that. You vote based on the merit of the individual,
2 do you like the person.

3 Another issue is, we talked about
4 nonpartisanship, but now we're talking about County
5 Council positions, making them nonpartisan as the
6 representative was just saying.

7 Amending the charter; that is, changing the way
8 that the charter can be amended. Quite frankly, right
9 now this Commission is one that makes recommendations
10 to King County Council. There's a debate as to whether
11 those recommendations necessarily have to be taken
12 seriously and addressed by King County Council if they
13 don't like them. So there's a question about whether
14 the charter itself should be amended so that the
15 recommendations of this body can become a little more
16 forceful and a little more required on King County or
17 whether we could find some other way to get our issues
18 that are raised in this process before the voters.

19 Campaign finance reform. This one's a little
20 problematic because there is some case law as I
21 understand in Washington, and, Skip, you may know this
22 better than I do, but there's the issue about getting
23 the public to actually foot the bill for elections.
24 That is, taking a little bit of the fund-raising out of
25 the electoral process so that if anyone wants to run

1 they're not restrained from doing so because they don't
2 have a war chest available to pay for advertising and
3 things like that.

4 Do you want to talk about this at all, Skip?

5 SKIP PRIEST: It's an issue the legislature has
6 looked at. By law you can't limit what other people
7 want to spend, and so part of the confusion occurs that
8 even if you provide certain levels of state funding, if
9 a major organization like the trial lawyers or the BIAW
10 or somebody else wants to spend money they can do it.
11 Freedom of speech.

12 And so it's a very complicated subject. But if
13 anybody wants to follow up on election laws in general,
14 I'm glad to -- just contact my office, and I'm more
15 than glad to chat about it.

16 But there have been some public financing
17 efforts in the legislature in fact last year to look
18 into and begin the debate on whether or not we should
19 be moving in a different direction when it comes to
20 public financing.

21 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: It's a valid issue.
22 It's not one size fits all, and I think there are
23 various views all around the country on this thing.

24 Paid signature gatherers, whether we should
25 find some way to bar them. There are some people who

1 believe that those signature gatherers outside of
2 Safeway are nothing but a nuisance and you should get
3 rid of them. Other people say, hey, it's freedom of
4 speech, right? You have a right to pay people to
5 inform the public about the issues of the day. So why
6 not have these paid people out there disseminating
7 information that otherwise wouldn't be getting to the
8 public. Another valid issue for us to deal with.

9 Regional committees. I know that Pete probably
10 shares some of the angst and frustration of County
11 councilmembers who say that now that they've been
12 shrunk from 13 to 9 they have more responsibilities to
13 go to more meetings than they ever could possibly
14 attend in a lifetime. They have more meetings
15 scheduled than they have hours in the day. That means
16 the meetings will go on longer than they're going to
17 be alive. So we're saying maybe change the charter so
18 that there are fewer meetings that you have to attend.

19 Do you want to speak to that one, Pete, or not?

20 COUNCILMEMBER VON REICHBAUER: No. I'm chair
21 of the Regional Policy Committee. So I had better not
22 say anything.

23 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Okay. You have another
24 meeting to go to.

25 (Laughter)

1 Anyway, last but not least is the issue of the
2 sheriff being appointed versus elected. As you know,
3 the sheriff right now is elected. Some people think
4 that that position ought to be appointed. I don't know
5 what the right answer is, but I do know this.

6 We are all going to be far better citizens as a
7 result of what's happening right now. The former
8 governor of this great state has just entered the room.
9 I feel him. I didn't even see him, but I felt the
10 power and the energy for Mike Lowry coming into the
11 room.

12 Mr. Chair, would you come up and greet this
13 warm audience from Federal Way with a few kind words.

14 (Applause)

15 GOVERNOR LOWRY: I really snuck in so they
16 didn't notice I was late.

17 Mr. Councilmember, thank you for always your
18 cooperation and your friendship. I have enjoyed it a
19 long time.

20 James and members of the Commission, thank you
21 so much for the work on this important endeavor, and
22 thank you to the citizens for being here because, as
23 you know, you've been told I'm sure, we're in the
24 process of getting the public input, at which point
25 then we will move on down this process and hope to do

1 the best job possible for the people of King County as
2 they well deserve.

3 So thank you very much for being here.

4 Peter, thank you for being here.

5 James, thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you, Mr. Governor.

7 (Applause)

8 So, unless there are specific questions or
9 additional input that anyone in the audience would like
10 to have added to the record. Going, going --

11 Yes, ma'am, in the back.

12 LYNDA JENKINS: I feel that we have not had
13 representation from the (unintelligible). I don't know
14 of anybody else that's known --

15 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: I'm sorry. Could you say
16 your name?

17 LYNDA JENKINS: My name is Lynda Jenkins, and
18 I've lived here 45 years, and I read the papers and so
19 forth, and I don't think that you have advertised this
20 to the local citizen. You can see here, we probably
21 have maybe ten people from Federal Way. So I think
22 this is something that we should deal with.

23 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: I heard that. Basically
24 she's saying the outreach from King County on this was
25 not quite up to par because more citizens in Federal

1 Way should have been made aware of this because these
2 are some pretty important issues, and I think that's a
3 point well taken, a point that we will take back and
4 talk about.

5 Any other input, good or bad, even if you just
6 want to say hello?

7 Before we go, I think we ought to give a round
8 of applause for the folks who have hosted us at the
9 Senior Center. They did a fabulous job of giving us
10 this place on short notice. We very much appreciate
11 them doing that.

12 Yes.

13 GOVERNOR LOWRY: Some of the commissioners here
14 might have some questions for the audience members.

15 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: I'm sorry. We have
16 commissioners in the audience. The question is, do you
17 have questions, questions for the questioners?

18 COMMISSIONER LAVENDER: Sure, I'll ask
19 questions.

20 On the issue of partisan versus nonpartisan, we
21 have heard from some people that when you go to vote
22 and you don't really know who the person is, at least
23 knowing that they're a Democrat or Republican gives you
24 some information about them. Is that important to
25 people or not?

1 MANY AUDIENCE MEMBERS: No, no.

2 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Did you guys follow what
3 she was saying? I think it's a very good point. We've
4 seen correspondence from some of the Council members in
5 that respect.

6 Yes.

7 JAMES BURROWS: I think you could just identify
8 them. They could say R or D, but you don't have to say
9 I'm a Democrat to vote. That's the problem.

10 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: I see what he's saying.

11 Yes ma'am. Would you go over there because we
12 want you to be on the record so we know what you said.
13 Please give your name.

14 MARGARET LOOS: My name is Margaret Loos.

15 I agree that it does tell you something about
16 where a person's, what their ideology is when you know
17 the party, and a primary is a nominating election. So
18 it's not that you can't vote. I mean, you vote. We
19 don't register by party. You can vote a different
20 party every primary if you want.

21 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you.

22 Any other input?

23 Yes, sir.

24 H. DAVID KAPLAN: My name is H. David Kaplan.

25 But I really want the Commission to concentrate

1 on this library issue because we're dealing with an
2 enormous amount of money, a Board that's unresponsive,
3 an Executive Director who, well, I don't know how to
4 characterize him other than he totally says the public
5 be damned, in so many words, and this is really
6 terribly frustrating.

7 I don't know if you're aware of what we had to
8 go through in Federal Way about our library
9 construction. Suddenly the Library Board said, well,
10 we're just going to move it over to the Transit Center.
11 There was no public discussion, and we forced the issue
12 and we managed to get 93 people speaking at four public
13 meetings and nearly 700 names on a petition.

14 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: 879.

15 H. DAVID KAPLAN: Oh, I thought it was 700.

16 879 names on a petition to keep the library
17 where it was, and in April of last year the Library
18 Board said, okay, we're not going to move it to the
19 Transit Center.

20 I specifically asked the Executive Director at
21 the June meeting, okay, you said you wouldn't move it
22 to the Transit Center, but you didn't say you're going
23 to rebuild it at its current location which is what we
24 voted for.

25 And he said, okay, we will rebuild it at the

1 current location.

2 There should never have been a reason for the
3 public or me to have to go through this with an elected
4 official or an appointed official with accountability.

5 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Certainly one of the
6 issues we flagged. The King County Public Library
7 System needs some scrutiny, and we're definitely going
8 to bring that to the Commission's attention.

9 H. DAVID KAPLAN: Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Other comments? We
11 always like to be within an hour. It's 7:25. I feel
12 like I'm giving you like six minutes of your life back.

13 On behalf of the Commission, Governor Lowry,
14 Ms. North, and Executive Sims, we want to thank you for
15 making the time to join us this evening. Again, thank
16 you to the Federal Way Senior Center for hosting us
17 tonight. Round of applause for them.

18 (Applause)

19 And look forward to seeing our report at some
20 point next year.

21 Thank you very much.

22 (The meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m.)

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24

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C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF WASHINGTON)
)
COUNTY OF KING)

I, the undersigned officer of the Court,
under my commission as a Notary Public in and for
the State of Washington and as a Registered
Professional Reporter hereby certify that the
foregoing proceedings were taken stenographically
before me and that this transcript was prepared by
me and is a true, complete and accurate
transcription of same to the best of my ability.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my
hand and seal this _____ day of _____ 2007.

/S/SANDRA JARCHOW

NOTARY PUBLIC in and for the
State of Washington.
My commission expires:
August 20, 2007.

LETTERS_____LETTERS_____LETTERS_____